

Perfectly Useless

Though many of us feel mired in the current economic crisis, we must all grasp the importance of looking ahead to the day when we have returned to something that will pass for normalcy. And just what do I mean by "pass for normalcy"? Well, I do not foresee a return to a version of "normalcy" in the same sense that the word is presently understood. Instead, I see something that, in time, will be accepted as normal, though by present-day standards it may appear, um, odd.

I will introduce this future scenario of mine with a baby step or two, so as not to shock. Let me begin with a reference to the well known economic principle that supported the idea of paying farmers *not* to grow vegetables, despite the vast amount of poverty and hunger within the world, within our own borders for that matter. To simplify the point of the idea for those who must find it incomprehensible, though its advocates have always passed every test of sanity, it has to do with, well, it's because, so okay, to put it plainly: economic systems involve delicately (if not precariously) intertwined components, where each part must act upon the whole in a precisely prescribed manner. So too many vegetables flooding the market would drive the unit cost down, cheap food, something for nothing, who needs to work for lots of money when veggies are so cheap, but we need you to work just the same because of what you make, and then inflation, or maybe deflation, much too much food, screw the hungry who needs them, etc., etc. (That sounded good, I think.)

This brings me to my future normalcy scenario. I think you're ready – but if not, there's no great hurry, it might not be here for years anyway. Firstly, before my idea comes into play, all of the present economic problems must have already been resolved, somehow or another. I do not care how, that is of no concern to me, I am only focusing on what happens after that. We each have our own part to play in the whole "delicately intertwined components" economy, as previously described, and my part, or idea rather, doesn't come into play until after it's all been solved.

So here we are, the sun is shining, the birds are twittering, the insects the birds eat are running for their lives, the poor are hungry, the economy is back on track and all is right with the world. I know exactly how to maintain it: no more new discoveries, no more innovations. If things were delicately/precariouly intertwined before, now surely the specific nature of the intertwining is even more delicate/precariouly. Every change, even of the slightest variety, could set off a chain reaction amongst all things both great and small to such a degree that, well, I shudder to think.

People must be employed, they must have money, so they must be employed, because they must have money. The problem is, more and more, just about any new thing people are employed to make could easily threaten the balance. Higher productivity or new products set off economic factors that could start the trouble all over again. So, it's simple: as with the previously described, excessive veggies that farmers were paid not to grow, we set people to work making things that have no use, no function, nothing that could compete with any existing product. And everyone would be required to buy one per month, for a dollar each.

It might take a genius to come up with a thing so profoundly devoid of usefulness. And yes, there will be those unable to hold themselves back from devising unforeseen functions for this thing. We will silence those people. Or if necessary, invent a new useless thing. The key is that it never competes with anything, no products are made obsolete because of it, no money in relation to it has been redirected unexpectedly away from purchasing those things for which the money has been pre-designated. It must never catch on, and we will each buy one a month for a dollar. That's important, more than one a month for a dollar and I don't know what might happen, it could mean bread lines and hobos, a chain reaction as has never been seen. We must start to work at coming up with this thing at once, so as to be ready when the time comes. I can feel the gears turning already.